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DISCUSSION.

ROYCE AS A SOCIAL INTERPRETER.

In a recent issue of this JOURNAL¹ Professor Bakewell makes the claim that in the ethical idealism of Professor Royce we have an interpretation of the spirit of American civilization. Professor Royce's interests were ethical and logical rather than metaphysical, Professor Bakewell tells us, hence the felt need on his part of a reconciliation between individual independence and institutional authority so urgent in a democracy. He felt constrained to ask how we are to preserve our personal loyalties and yet harmonise them with the ultimate and more comprehensive loyalties that find expression through society. Because this problem and Professor Royce's proposed solution grew out of the immediate social situation in American democracy Professor Bakewell contends we are justified in viewing Professor Royce's work "as an interpretation of the spirit of American civilization."

Stated in this comprehensive fashion it can hardly be said that Royce's problem is peculiar to American conditions. It emerges wherever diverse groups and individuals are forced to live together under common institutions. They become thereby compelled to "comprehend one another, to respect one another, to organize their wills into some sort of universality, to live in spiritual union, to give the common life the most complete wholeness that is possible." It is not the purpose of this paper, however, to discuss the general question of Professor Royce's interpretation of American civilization. I wish to confine myself to one instance offered by Professor Bakewell in support of his thesis, namely, Professor Royce's interpretation of the race question.

Professor Royce was able to supplement his theoretical interest in the race question by repeated trips to Jamaica. He circled the island, visited its ports, walked over its admirable roads, read its official literature, studied the negro peasantry at work and entered sympathetically into the life of all classes of the people. (Royce has set down his conclusions in an essay published in this JOURNAL, "Race Questions and

¹ "Royce as an Interpreter of American Ideals," April, 1917, pp. 306-316.

Prejudices," Vol. XVI, pp. 265 ff, subsequently embodied in his book *Race Questions and Other American Problems*, 1908. The quotations are from the article.) His conclusion was that whatever the defects of Jamaica "our own present Southern race-problem in the forms which we know best simply does not exist" (p. 272). He found there extraordinarily little race friction. The blacks, while aspiring, are "wholesomely self-conscious." The whites dominate the situation but differ strikingly from the whites of the Southern States in that they are not constantly and arrogantly asserting their superiority. The Englishman "has a great way of being superior without very often publicly saying that he is superior" (p. 275). Therefore, concludes Professor Royce, if ever the Southern race problem is to be solved it must be after the "English way," best summarised in the two phrases, "English administration" and "English reticence."

A careful reading of Professor Royce's essay will show that two assumptions underlie all that he has to say. The first is that race-prejudices and antipathies are "human illusions," the second is that conditions in Jamaica are for all practical purposes so closely akin to those in the Southern States that we may safely draw parallels between them. Let us consider this last assumption first. The sheer fact that only two per cent of the 800,000 Jamaicans are white apparently should have warned against drawing parallels with American conditions where such a percentage is nowhere approximated even in the "black belt." Moreover the peculiar position of this two per cent of whites who "predominate in the governing and employing classes and as merchants and planters lead and direct the industrial life of the island" (Oliver, *White Capital and Coloured Labour*," p. 34) at once places them in a legally recognised status apart from the black which makes race friction practically impossible. It is an interesting fact that the least race friction in the South is to be found in those sections of the "black belt" where the blacks outnumber the whites often fifteen and twenty to one and where, the war amendments and bills of rights to the contrary notwithstanding, the planter maintains a paternalistic regime resembling in many ways that of Jamaica.

Furthermore any comparison between Jamaican and Southern conditions must recognize that Jamaica has never known anything approximating democracy in the American sense. Apart from the Gordon riots of 1865 there has never been a time when

the white was not both *de facto* and *de jure* ruler of the island. The charming "law-abiding and contented" character of the Jamaican negro so admired by Professor Royce grows out of this benevolent paternalism of English rule. Professor Royce failed to see that for this reason the Englishman can afford to be "reticent"; he has no reason to assert his authority. It is guaranteed by the laws and institutions of the island. To reason, therefore, from the stable and legalised white superiority of Jamaican society to the unstable and illegal restrictions of the "color line" by which the Southern white attempts to maintain white supremacy without institutional sanctions and in the face of the most radical form of democracy is to say the least to ignore the facts.

Professor Royce was impressed also by the "rich social differentiation" among the black population of Jamaica who share in the government service, in the professions and smaller trades besides filling the ranks of the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. "The social organization of Jamaica," writes a former governor, "is therefore like a pyramid. The whites constitute the apex, the coloured class compose the middle courses, and the masses of negroes make up the broad base" (Livingstone, "Black Jamaica," p. 237). Obviously such a demarcation of classes and groups makes for social stability and tends to eliminate race friction since each group, the ruling white, the negro office-holder or tradesman and the mass of ignorant peasant laborers, occupies a status clearly determined by the institutional life of the island. This situation in no wise parallels that of the American negro who has heard for generations the doctrine of the inherent equality of all men, who in theory at least has been led to believe in his right to all the privileges and emoluments of society on the same footing with the white. Professor Royce, of course, would never have consented to the purchase of an "orderly, law-abiding and contented" spirit for the American negro by sacrificing American democracy to a well-intentioned paternalism. Indeed it may very well be questioned whether present conditions of race friction together with the vast unhappiness they bring to the American negro do not contain the promise and potency of a racial advancement utterly undreamed of by the Jamaican peasant in the contented isolation of his happy, semi-feudal plantation life.

Undoubtedly the humanitarian zeal which led Professor Royce to overlook the fundamental differences between Jamaican and

Southern conditions also influenced him in his summary treatment of race as a factor in the problem. Royce has small regard for the *Rassentheoretiker* who too often "uses his science to support most of his personal prejudices" (p. 267). He esteems the data gathered from the natural history of the mind or from the physiological differences of men as too fragmentary and untrustworthy to admit of any final conclusion. The science of race-psychology has yet to be discovered (p. 282). His conclusion is that there is "hardly any one thing that our actual knowledge of the human mind enables us to assert, with any scientific exactness, regarding the permanent, the hereditary, the unchangeable mental characteristics which distinguish even the most widely sundered physical varieties of mankind" (p. 284). Suppose all this be granted, does it follow that the so-called race-problems do not exist, or that they are but "problems caused by our antipathies?" Does our ignorance justify the assertion that race antipathies are "childish phenomena in our lives, phenomena on a level with the dread of snakes, or of mice, phenomena that we share with the cats and with the dogs, not noble phenomena, but caprices of our complex nature"? (p. 286).

Obviously we have here the voice of the idealist, of the ardent lover of his kind rather than of the scientist. Race antipathy was undoubtedly particularly obnoxious to Royce. It was the unpardonable social sin since it prevented the moral insight, the spirit of fair play, the sympathy and co-operation absolutely necessary to the attainment of the ideal. He saw in it the concrete embodiment of the cruel and irrational egotism that closes men's hearts to each other and prevents each from entering whole-heartedly into the life of the other and into the life of all. But our idealist who combatted so vigorously the cynical egotism of the *Rassentheoretiker* and the harsher prejudices of the negro-baiter himself fell a victim to another type of prejudice though far nobler and sweeter, namely, the prejudice of the enthusiastic humanitarian in behalf of his own ideals. By categorically classifying all race differences and race prejudices among the "human illusions" Royce became almost as much of a race dogmatist as Senator Vardaman or the *Rassentheoretiker* Gobineau, Ammon, LaPouge and Chamberlain. All the criticisms, therefore, which he levelled with such force against these writers apply just as cogently to himself. To be sure, he has become a *Rassentheoretiker* in the interest of a beautiful and unselfish humanitari-

anism rather than in the service of the aristocratic Aryanism of Gobineau or the insane German *Rassedunkel* of Chamberlain but his is a *Rassentheoretiker* nevertheless. His sweeping assertions are hardly in harmony with the sober conclusions of science.²

There are, of course, many sides to a personality so brilliant and so varied in its interests as that of Professor Royce. He was far more than the professional metaphysician or the acute dialectician; he was also seer and spiritual reformer. I have sometimes felt that in dealing with social questions such as the one under discussion Professor Royce was more of a preacher of righteousness than a careful student of the facts, a champion of our higher spiritual loyalties as he understood them rather than the accurate interpreter of life. The enthusiasm of the ideal emancipated him from the concrete; it carried within itself immediate witness to its truth and worth. "He has in his vision of the ideal, in his moral insight," as Professor Bakewell remarks, "a sure criterion" at least for himself. But this very self-sufficiency of the ideal and its tendency to set the reformer free from the troublesome details of the objective reality inevitably ends by placing him at the mercy of the objective situation itself. Hence the painstaking student emerging slowly from the thick of the actual experience, and impressed with the vast complexity, the stubborn contradictions of the facts is very apt to be out of sympathy with the sweeping apriorism of the humanitarian who strives to "see into life by seeing over it."

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² Boas, "The Mind of Primitive Man," p. 115; for other data see Mecklin, "Democracy and Race Friction," Chs. II and III.